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Tansy ragwort flowers



Tansy rosette

## TANSY RAGWORT

Tansy ragwort (*Senecio Jacobea*) is a commonly found poisonous weed in the Lower Fraser Valley and on southern Vancouver Island. Originally introduced into North America as a medicinal herb, tansy ragwort has been causing increasing levels of pasture loss and livestock deaths since the 1950's.

Tansy ragwort is a short-lived perennial weed that can grow as tall as 4 feet in ideal conditions. One ragwort plant can produce 150,000 seeds which are easily dispersed by wind, water and animals. These seeds can stay dormant in the soil for many years and can germinate in both spring and fall. This makes control of this weed challenging at times.

Tansy ragwort contains at least six pyrrolizidine alkaloids which by themselves are not toxic. Once the plant has been ingested, these alkaloids combine with liver enzymes which are then converted into pyrroles which results in liver dysfunction. Horses, Cattle and Goats are most seriously affected and can be poisoned by consuming only 2 to 8 percent of their body weight. While grazing animals will generally avoid consuming this weed, it is recommended that animals be kept off pastures that contain more than 5% tansy ragwort.

### Symptoms

Tansy poisoning is generally cumulative, by eating small amounts over an extended period of time, and may occur even after the animal has been removed from the pasture. Symptoms include photosensitization, depression, loss of appetite, restlessness and aimless wandering, walking into objects, yellow or muddy discolouration of mucous membranes and an unpleasant pig-like skin odour.

### Control

#### Prevention

Don't let Tansy Ragwort go to seed. Hand-pull isolated plants and small patches and remove as much of the root as possible. In heavy infestations you must mow often and thoroughly to do any good. Plants mowed after flowering begins can still produce seed.

Maintain a healthy competitive forage stand by regularly overseeding forage grasses and legumes, fertilizing according to soil needs and avoiding overgrazing. Reseeding any soil disturbances such as rodent push-ups, hoof marks, vehicle tracks, etc is highly recommended. Ragwort quickly establishes where soil is exposed or where forage grass is in a weakened condition.

#### Chemical Control

Tansy Ragwort can be easily controlled in the seedling to young rosette stage with 2,4-D Amine with a rate of up to 1.6L/acre. Applying in early spring or mid-fall when active new growth is occurring is most effective. When rosettes are large or in more advanced growth stages, Banvel at the recommended rate of 800mL/acre can provide excellent control. Since both chemicals are a selective broadleaf herbicide, clover may also be damaged. Remove animals from treated pastures for 7-10 days as these herbicides can increase the palatability of poisonous plants. USE CAUTION WHEN USING HERBICIDES AND READ THE LABEL BEFORE USE.

#### References:

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/tansy.htm>

[http://www.coastalinvasiveplants.com/invasive\\_plants.php?id=36](http://www.coastalinvasiveplants.com/invasive_plants.php?id=36)

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/weedguid/tansyrag.htm>

[http://weedsbc.ca/pdf/tansy\\_ragwort.pdf](http://weedsbc.ca/pdf/tansy_ragwort.pdf)

# Pest Bulletin

Toxic Weed Series



## TANSY RAGWORT

compared to

## ST. JOHN'S WORT



Tansy ragwort flowers

There are two weeds that are similar at first glance; Tansy Ragwort and Common St. John's Wort. It is important to know the difference between them. Why? Both are toxic to some degree, and Tansy Ragwort is listed under the Canadian Seeds Act as a Primary Noxious Weed. Besides being much more toxic to stock than Common St. John's Wort, Tansy is capable of causing economic damage by infesting many acres of range and pasture. We won't go into the differences in toxicity in this article, instead focusing on how to tell the difference between the two weeds.



St. John's Wort



Tansy Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) is a biennial in the sunflower family. Forming a rosette as a younger plant, it grows single stems up to a couple of meters tall from a taproot. The leaves are very deeply divided and 2 to 8 inches long, and grow alternately on the stem. Like a sunflower, the yellow flowers are of two types; central disk flowers and ray or petals. Flowers are notably clustered at the top and have more than ten petals.

Common St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) is a perennial. It grows multiple stems up to a meter long, resembling a bush. The leaves are long ovals not more than one inch in length. A very distinctive feature is the presence of tiny transparent dots on the bottom of the leaves that are apparent when held up to a light source. Flowers are the same bright yellow as Tansy Ragwort, but have always and only five petals, no central disk like a sunflowers, and have long and obvious stamens.

